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Thetis: the goddess between four worlds

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CENTRE FOR ODYSSEAN STUDIES

THE UPPER AND THE UNDER WORLD IN HOMERIC AND ARCHAIC EPIC

Proceedings
of the 13th International Symposium on the Odyssey
Ithaca, August 25-29, 2017

Editors

MENELAOS CHRISTOPOULOS
MACHI PAÏZI-APOSTOLOPOULOU



ITHACA 2020

ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ

Ο ΕΠΑΝΩ ΚΑΙ Ο ΚΑΤΩ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΣΤΟ ΟΜΗΡΙΚΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΑΡΧΑΪΚΟ ΕΠΟΣ

Από τα Πρακτικά
του ΙΓ' Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου για την Οδύσσεια
Ιθάκη, 25-29 Αυγούστου 2017

Επιστημονική επιμέλεια
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ΜΑΧΗ ΠΑΪΖΗ-ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ



... κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα (Όδ. λ 539)

ΙΘΑΚΗ 2020

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NAOKO YAMAGATA

THETIS:
THE GODDESS BETWEEN FOUR WORLDS

This paper aims to explore the nature of Thetis by locating her spheres of influence within the *Iliad*. As has been made most evident by Slatkin's work¹, though implicitly taken for granted by many, Thetis' presence is as unique and as powerful as her son Achilles's in the *Iliad* and her role within the poem deserves close attention. She appears to move between four domains of the Homeric universe, namely heaven (Mt. Olympus), the earth, the underworld and the sea, the latter of which is her native home. She lives in the sea along with her family of sea deities most of the time, but is also connected with the human world through her marriage to Peleus and their son Achilles. She also has access to Olympus through her special connections with Zeus, Hera and Hephaestus. She does not visit Hades within the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but she may have visited Tartarus to fetch Briareus to help Zeus (*Il.* 1. 401-406) and her battle with death on behalf of her mortal son Achilles, through her attempt to make him invulnerable or immortal as told in non-Homeric traditions,² takes her close to the underworld, too.³ The present study aims to show some aspects of Thetis that make her unique, by examining her movements and locations

1. SLATKIN 1991, esp. 27-28 = SLATKIN 2011, 36.

2. Cf. BURGESS 1995, 217-224 for a detailed discussion of tales of Thetis' attempts to protect Achilles in non-Homeric traditions. He argues that the tradition of Achilles' dipping in the Styx originated in the Hellenistic period, though it does not occur in literature till Statius (Conclusion 237-240). Cf. also BURGESS 2009, 8-11.

3. In addition she is arguably connected with Hades through Achilles, with his anger (and through her intervention) sending many of his friends and foes into Hades, as the opening of the *Iliad* (1. 3-4) announces. Cf. DOVA 2012, 102, who also mentions Agamemnon's comparison of Achilles to Hades (*Il.* 9. 158).

in comparison with the other principal gods in the *Iliad*.

We start by charting her movements and locations in order to find out where she belongs and what makes her different from other gods. On Table (1) the locations of Thetis have been mapped out book by book in the *Iliad*. No account has been taken of the internal chronology of the story, such as the fact that Thetis lived with Peleus in the past from the main events in the *Iliad*, but her locations are listed purely in the order in which lines describing or mentioning Thetis appear.

As can be seen from the table she is mentioned constantly throughout the poem, connecting her to heaven because of the repeated mention of her supplication to Zeus to honour her son Achilles (*Il.* 1. 498-531). The mention of her being the mother of Achilles, which implies that she married Peleus, lived with him and gave birth to Achilles in his house, also occurs in the majority of the books, including the one occasion on which the fact is negated by Patroclus in his bitter reproach, saying that Thetis is NOT Achilles' mother (16. 34).⁴ She is first identified as Achilles' mother when he calls out to her on the seashore after his quarrel with Agamemnon (1. 351) and her very first action mentioned in the poem is giving birth to him to be short-lived (1. 352). It is also notable that whereas the poem begins with the line identifying Achilles as 'Peleus' son' (1.1), when Hector imagines the possibility of defeating Achilles, he is the 'son of lovely-haired Thetis' (16. 860-861), which underscores his mortality in contrast with his divine descent through his mother.⁵ References to her prophecy concerning the death of Achilles (and/or Patroclus),⁶ which pre-

4. The other 'negative mentions' also taken into account on the table are 1) Achilles saying that Thetis will NOT be able to welcome him back in Phthia (18. 332) and 2) the *absence* of Thetis' prophecy (16. 50-51).

5. Cf. *Il.* 4. 512 where Apollo points out the absence of 'Thetis' son' Achilles when he is trying to encourage the Trojans, implying that he is the most formidable of Achaeans due to his divine descent. Cf. AMEIS-HENZE 1905 ad 16. 860.

6. Thetis' prophecies are mentioned at *Il.* 9. 410-416, 11. 794-795 (as a possibility), 16. 36-37 (as a possibility), 16. 50-51 (absence of), 17. 408-411 (prophecy in the past vs lack of prophecy regarding Patroclus' fate), 18. 9-11 (regarding Patroclus) and 21. 276-278.

sumably also took place while she was on the earth in the human world, are included there.

Within the timeframe of the actions in the *Iliad*, however, she is back in the sea, her original home. The sea is the starting point of her journey when she hears her son's distress which prompts her to come to meet him (1. 357-359, 18. 65-70). Both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (24. 47-92) she only goes as far as the seashore to see her son and his comrades, where the Achaean ships are beached and Achaean assemblies and funerals take place. Thetis was also at home in the sea when she rescued Dionysus (*Il.* 6. 132-137) and Hephaestus (*Il.* 18. 394-399, jointly with another sea-goddess Eurynome).⁷

She does not visit the Underworld in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, except in the curious episode of her bringing Briareus to help Zeus (*Il.* 1. 401-406) which may be an occasion on which she visited Tartarus (or its gate), since Hesiod's *Theogony* 734 makes Briareus along with Gyges and Cottus the gate keepers of Tartarus.⁸ The later tradition that recounts her attempt to make Achilles invulnerable by dipping him in the water of the Styx has no place in the *Iliad*, as his inability to join the battle without his armour makes it clear (18. 188).⁹ It is also unclear whether the audience or reader of the *Iliad* is meant to understand that Thetis attempted and failed to make Achilles immortal just after his birth, as is known through other versions of his myth. There is no trace of that tale in the *Iliad*, since both Achilles and Thetis emphasise that Achilles was born to be short-lived,¹⁰

7. For the genealogy that connects Thetis to Eurynome via her mother Doris as Eurynome's sister, see Hesiod, *Theogony* 240-244 and 337-363, esp. 350 and 358. Eurynome is also Hephaestus' mother-in-law in the *Iliad* as he is married to one of the Charites, who are daughters of Eurynome (*Theogony* 907). Cf. EDWARDS 1991, ad *Il.* 18. 397-399.

8. NAGY 1979, 347, points out his connection with sea deities, both as Briareus and Aigaion. See also NAGY 1979, 346, where he describes Briareus as 'a sort of nightmarish variant of Achilles himself', being stronger than his father (*Il.* 1. 404).

9. Cf. GRIFFIN 1977, 40 for the *Iliad*'s avoidance of the fantastic, including invulnerability of mortal heroes.

10. *Il.* 1. 352, 416, 505-6.

except her separation from Peleus, which tallies with the outcome of such tales, resulting from his interruption of her attempt to make Achilles immortal.¹¹ Unlike in the *Aethiopis* (as far as we can tell from Proclus' summary) Thetis of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* has no intention of taking her son to a happier afterlife whether in the White Island, Elysium or the Isles of the Blessed.

This spatial profile of Thetis is condensed into one row of boxes in Table (2) along with the similarly condensed profiles of 14 other individual gods and two groups of gods, namely the other Nereids and 'all the gods' collectively, to make the comparison easier. The categories of activities undertaken in each area of the universe by those gods are entered into this table. With this data in hand we are now able to ask a number of questions to consider how unique Thetis is, compared with the other main deities featuring in the *Iliad*.

Looking at the 'Heaven' and 'Sea' columns together we can ask if Thetis is unique in commuting directly between Olympus and the sea. The answer is clearly no, because Iris comes from Olympus to fetch Thetis from her underwater home to take her to Zeus' house in Olympus (24. 77-99). Poseidon also has his home (or perhaps his second home) in the sea between Tenedos and Imbros (13. 32-38), though he is not depicted commuting directly between Olympus and the sea anywhere in the *Iliad*.

This leads us to ask whether Thetis is unique among the gods in not frequenting Olympus. Again the answer is no, as other sea deities, including her sisters Nereids, do not normally live in heaven either, even though when Zeus summons 'all the gods', every god except Oceanus is said to have assembled at Olympus (*Il.* 20. 5-12). Hades is another interesting example who rarely leaves his home, but even he went to Olympus when wounded by Heracles, in order to get medical attention of Paieon (*Il.* 5. 398-402). Clearly the gods who normally live in Olympus and those who normally live in the sea do not visit each other very often. Hephaestus and

11. Cf. BURGESS 1995, 220-221.

Charis' complaint to Thetis for never visiting them before (*Il.* 18. 386, 425) can be compared to Calypso's to Hermes in the *Odyssey* expressed in identical lines (*Od.* 5. 88).

Thirdly, still looking at the 'Sea' column, the rescues of Hephaestus (18. 398-405, jointly with Eurynome) and Dionysus (6. 136) by Thetis mentioned above may deserve further attention. Is Thetis (and Eurynome) unique in taking in refugees from other parts of the world? Again the answer is no, as Hera tells of the story of Oceanus and Tethys who sheltered her and brought her up (14. 201-203).¹² Also in the same book is the episode of Night sheltering Sleep, preventing him from being thrown into the sea from the sky (14. 258-261).

Moving onto the 'Earth' columns of Tables (1) and (2), we focus on Thetis' relationship with her human husband and her son by him. Obviously she is not unique among the gods in having a child by a mortal partner. As Hera reminds Zeus when he wonders whether he should save his son Sarpedon (16. 433-438), there are numerous children born of divine-human unions, many of whom are fighting at Troy (16. 448-449). As we can see from the 'Earth' column of Table (2), Zeus,¹³ Poseidon,¹⁴ Hermes,¹⁵ Aphrodite¹⁶ and Ares¹⁷ are shown to have had children by mortal

12. See JANKO 1992, ad 14. 200-207 for Greek and Near Eastern variants of the myth of Oceanus and Tethys. It may also be worth noting the different geographical shapes of the sea and Oceanus. While the sea provides the safety through vertical distance between the heaven or the earth and the bottom of the sea, Oceanus is envisaged as a stretch of water around the edge of the earth, thereby providing the safety through horizontal distance from the rest of the world. Cf. LESKY 1966 discusses the geography of Oceanus in relation to the Aethiopians, whom he locates on both Eastern and Western ends of the earth.

13. Cf. *Il.* 2. 741 Peirithoos; 3. 199, 418, 426 Helen, specifically identified as 'Zeus' daughter'; 6. 198-199 Sarpedon; 14. 250 Heracles; 20. 215 Dardanus; 21. 189 Aeacus; and most notoriously 14. 317-328 in which Zeus recounts his various affairs to Hera.

14. Cf. 11. 749-751 his sons by Molione; He also has grandsons fighting on the battlefield, i.e. Amphimachos at 13. 206-207 and Nestor at 1. 247 and *passim*.

15. Cf. 16. 179-186 Eudoros.

16. Cf. 2. 820-821 and *passim* Aeneas.

17. Cf. 2. 512-515 Ascalaphus and Ialmenus.

partners.¹⁸ Although her son Memnon is not mentioned in the *Iliad*, Eos also belongs to this category of gods whose situation parallels that of Thetis in the context of the *Aethiopis*.¹⁹

However, if we rephrase the question as whether Thetis is unique in having lived with a mortal husband at his home in the human world, the answer is arguably yes. Thetis is said to have given birth to Achilles in the 'house' (1. 418 ἐν μεγάροις) presumably at Peleus'. We have a glimpse of her life of being a loving mother back in Phthia in the depiction of her packing clothes for Achilles in the chest before his Trojan expedition (16. 222-224).²⁰ In contrast Aphrodite is said to have given birth to Aeneas in the folds of Mt. Ida (2. 820-821), half-way between the divine and human worlds, as it were, and never lived with Anchises.²¹ Eos, on the other hand, does seem to live with Tithonus, judging by the depiction of her appearance at the beginning of *Iliad* 11 (1-2), but their abode does not appear to be in the human world, as she rises from the streams of Oceanus at the beginning of *Iliad* 19 (1-2).

Furthermore Thetis is possibly unique in being an unwilling divine partner in the divine-human relationship. Whilst Aphrodite and Eos were the ones who made advances²² (as were Circe and Calypso in the *Odys-*

18. Curiously Apollo's affairs and offspring are not mentioned in the *Iliad*, except the allusion to his kidnapping of Alcyone/Cleopatra at 9. 556-564 and the name of Achilles' homeland, Phthia, which reminds of its eponymous heroine who bore three sons to Apollo, Dorus, Laodocus and Polypoetes. Cf. Apollodorus, *The Library* 1.7.6. For the offspring of unions of minor deities and humans, cf. *Il.* 6. 21-22 (Boukolion); 14. 444-445 (Satnios); 16. 173-176 (Menesthios); 21. 157-159 (Pelegon).

19. Cf. SLATKIN 1991, Chapter 1, esp. 26-27 = SLATKIN 2011, Chapter 1, 36.

20. Achilles' lament that Thetis will not be able to welcome him back home in Phthia (18. 332) also gives a hypothetical possibility that she could have lived with Peleus and Achilles again, had he not died at Troy.

21. According to *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 256-258 Aphrodite did not even nurse Aeneas herself, but handed him over to the nymphs of Ida to bring him up. For the mountain nymphs' semi-divine lifestyle and status, see CLAY 2006, 194.

22. Although in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 247-255 she regrets succumbing to the madness of love, which is also a case of a goddess submitting to the will of Zeus. For the view that her love affair with Anchises signifies her defeat by Zeus, see YASUMURA 2011,

sey),²³ Thetis' marriage to Peleus was forced on her by Zeus,²⁴ so that she would not bear an immortal son who could overthrow Zeus. As Slatkin puts it, 'the price of Zeus's hegemony is Achilles' death'.²⁵ For Thetis it was a sacrifice for Zeus' regime. It is also implicit in her plea to Zeus in Book 1 (503-6) that she has done him a favour and therefore he is indebted to her to honour his son, who is destined to be most short-lived of all.

Looking at the 'Earth' and the 'Seashore' columns together we can consider the ways in which Thetis appears to her son and helps him in comparison with other gods' behaviour. We find many cases of other gods mingling with and openly assisting humans either in disguise or in their own form, especially Athena, Apollo, Poseidon, Ares and even Aphrodite within the *Iliad*.²⁶ Athena in particular seems comparable in her 'maternal' care for Odysseus, as jokingly pointed out by Olean Ajax at Patroclus' funeral games, saying that she always accompanies him like a mother (23. 782-783).²⁷ This reminds us of Zeus' comment that it is impossible to steal the body of Hector from Achilles because his mother Thetis is always near him night and day (24. 72-73).

There is, however, a distinct difference between the two mother goddesses, Thetis and Aphrodite, when it comes to protecting their mortal sons. As Slatkin points out, 'Thetis never spirits Achilles away from dan-

132 (along with further references in note 11, 191-192) and for her reluctance to admit the defeat, see BRILLET-DUBOIS 2011, 122.

23. Cf. Circe at *Od.* 10.333-335 and Calypso at *Od.* 1.14-15 respectively.

24. Cf. *Il.* 18. 434 πολλὰ μάλ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσα i.e. herself being 'very much unwilling'.

25. SLATKIN 1991, 101 = SLATKIN 2011, 82.

26. In addition Hera (5. 784-791 disguised as Stentor) and Hephaestus (5. 22-23 rescues Idaios, his priest's son, 21. 342-381 causes fire to protect Achilles from the river-god Xanthos) also join in the action on the battlefield, though not noticed by mortals. Artemis, who routinely causes sudden death to women (6. 205 Laodameia, 19. 59 Achilles' wish for Briseis' death, 24. 606 Niobe's daughters), and her mother Leto only appear on the battlefield during the battle of the gods opposite Hera and Hermes respectively 21.497-504. Leto and Artemis also heal the wound of Aeneas rescued by Apollo in his temple (5. 447-448).

27. This comment also applies very much to Athena's help to Odysseus and his family throughout the *Odyssey*. For her special relationship with Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, cf. YAMAGATA 1994, 35-37.

ger'.²⁸ This is perhaps unusual, considering that other gods actively help their mortal offspring, or sometimes even those mortals who have not descended from them, on the battlefield. Aphrodite not only comes to rescue her son Aeneas (5. 311-318), but also Paris (3. 380-382). Apollo rescues Aeneas (5. 444-446 when Aphrodite fails to do so; cf. 23. 292), Hector (20. 443-444) and Agenor (21. 596-598). Poseidon also protects Antilochus (13. 554-555, 562-563) and rescues his sons (11. 750-752 in Nestor's tale from the past) as well as Aeneas, as fate requires, even though he usually supports the Achaeans (20. 318-340).

Athena and Apollo in particular are very much involved in the battle, often opposed to each other in helping their favourite sides.²⁹ Most notably Athena fights alongside Diomedes and opposite Ares (cf. especially 5. 592-595 where Ares and Enyo support Hector) in his *aristeia* in Book 5 and helps Achilles during his duel with Hector, first by disguising herself as Deiphobos to lure Hector into the fatal duel and then by returning his spear to Achilles when it misses Hector (22. 214-277). Apollo on the other hand helps Hector run fast enough to evade Achilles (22. 202-204) until he stops to face Achilles. Apollo is also instrumental in destroying Patroclus. He pushes Patroclus away from the walls of Troy (16. 702-711) and hits him by his own hand to render him an easy prey to Euphorbos and Hector (16. 791-806). The two gods also protect their favourites by deflecting weapons from them. Athena deflects Hector's spear from Achilles (20. 438-440), minimises the wound from Pandarus' arrow for Menelaus (4. 130-140)³⁰ and minimises the wound from Sokos' spear for Odysseus (11. 437-438), while Apollo deflects Teukros' arrow from Hector (8. 311).

Zeus usually only observes action from afar, either from Mt. Olympus

28. SLATKIN 1991, 44 = SLATKIN 2011, 46. See also SLATKIN 1991, 43-44 = SLATKIN 2011, 46 for the contrast between Thetis and Aphrodite.

29. See especially 17. 71-82, 118, 322-332, 551-573, 582-90. They also interfere with Patroclus' funeral games. Cf. 23. 383-384, 388-397, 771-772, 862-865, 870-881.

30. Here again Athena is depicted in a maternal image, compared to a mother brushing a fly away from her sleeping child (4.130-131).

or Mt. Ida,³¹ but even he sometimes directly interferes with the action on the ground. He lightens the injury for his son Sarpedon when he is struck by Tlepolemos' spear (5. 662), deflects Teukros' arrow from Sarpedon (12. 402-403) and breaks Teukros' bowstring to protect Hector (15. 461-465). Zeus even pushes Hector forward by his own large hand to let him and his men advance (15. 694-695).³² Although when the fated moment of death comes even Zeus will have to abandon Hector (22. 182-185)³³ and Sarpedon (16. 458-460), he does not hesitate to interfere directly with the action on the battlefield while he can.

The movements of Poseidon as the sea god per excellence are of particular interest in comparison with those of Thetis and other gods. He does appear on the battlefield inland, saving Aeneas as we have seen above (20. 318-340), and joining in the *theomachy* in Book 21, for example, but he is the only god who is actively involved in the fighting for much of the battle on the seashore beside the Achaean ships (Books 13-15, up to 15. 219 when he returns to the sea). Apollo also briefly joins in the battle on the seashore by Zeus' order (15. 220-235) after Poseidon's departure, encouraging the Trojans, knocking down the Achaean wall and helping Hector crossing the ditch (15. 236-366). He also heals the wound of Glaucus during the battle (16. 527-529). Athena on the other hand gives indirect support to the Achaeans during the battle on the seashore, by removing the mist from their eyes (15. 668-670) and shouting along with Achilles to help drive the Trojan forces away from the Achaean wall (18. 217-218).

In contrast Thetis never goes into the battlefield, whether on the seashore or inland, to protect or help Achilles within the action of the *Iliad*. To be sure, she obtains a new set of god-made armour for Achilles, but

31. Cf. *Il.* 8. 47-48 for Mt. Ida as his viewing point and 3. 276 and 7. 202 for the prayers to Zeus as the deity watching over from Mt. Ida.

32. Hector for his part also feels Zeus' support (15. 724-725). However, there is no indication that Zeus has actually come down to the battlefield, unlike Apollo or Athena. He appears to be able to interfere with the action on the ground remotely from above.

33. Apollo also has to leave Hector when Zeus' scales indicate the moment of his death at 22. 209-213.

that is as far as she goes to protect him.³⁴ And unlike Eos in the *Aethiopis*, or even herself in that epic, Thetis does not seek immortality for Achilles.³⁵ Instead she laments Achilles' fate and his death before his death. But is this unusual within the *Iliad*, where even Zeus cannot seek immortality for his beloved son Sarpedon and instead can only lament by shedding the rain of blood (16. 459) before he is killed?

Ares' grief over the death of his son Ascalaphus is also striking. In his rage he tries to enter into the battle to take revenge on his son, saying that even if that meant that he would be struck down by Zeus' thunderbolt and lie in blood and dust among the dead men (15. 113-18). This is possibly as close as a god can go to sharing the experience of death with mortals and even Thetis would not go as far as that in empathising with Achilles.

Ares also has had an unusual experience recounted by Dione to Aphrodite (5. 385-391). He was chained up in a bronze jar by Ephialtes and Otus for thirteen months and nearly died, had he not been rescued by Hermes. Although the location of this jar is never mentioned, given that he had a 'near death' experience in this prison and that he had to be rescued by Hermes whose function includes a commuter between Hades' domain and the upper worlds, it can be argued that Ares has come closest to death than any other Olympian gods in the *Iliad*. Unlike Athena, who helped Heracles get back from Hades (*Il.* 8. 365-69, *Od.* 11. 626), Ares does not actually go to Hades, but being the god of war, he is constantly sending men there and is surrounded by the dead on the battlefield. Despite her son's role in sending souls of many heroes to Hades as announced at the opening of the poem (1. 3-4), Thetis in the *Iliad* does not appear to deal directly with the underworld herself.

34. SLATKIN 1991, 44 = SLATKIN 2011, 47 further observes that Thetis acts on behalf of Achilles 'only after asserting repeatedly the knowledge that he must die....' See also DOVA 2012, 112 for Thetis' discreet mode of support for Achilles.

35. As highlighted by A. T. EDWARDS 1985 and SLATKIN 1991, 27 = SLATKIN 2011, 36. See also RIDD 2017, 73, where he contrasts her power to rescue three male gods, i.e. Zeus, Dionysus and Hephaestus and her powerlessness to help her son.

Griffin seems to play down the concerns shown by the gods for their children and other favourite mortals despite such depictions as above, emphasising how readily Ares is consoled and that Zeus never mentions Sarpedon again after his death.³⁶ He says that ‘The god who mourns as a mortal mourns is Thetis, who has entered by her marriage into human life; and she of course is not at home on Olympus’.³⁷ As he points out Thetis only ever goes to Zeus’ palace reluctantly when she is summoned by him in Book 24, saying, ‘I shrink from mingling with the immortals; I have countless woes in my heart’.³⁸ It should also be noted as Tsagalis points out that when Thetis visits Zeus in Book 1, he is sitting alone on the highest peak of Mt. Olympus (1. 498-99)³⁹ and therefore she does not enter his palace on this occasion. And when she visits Hephaestus in Book 18, both he and Charis make the point that she had never visited them before, as we have already seen. Thetis is perhaps unusual in shunning the company of Olympian gods. But she is not at home in her human husband’s house either, where she will now never go back, nor is she prepared to stand by her son on the battlefield as Athena does for him (e.g. Book 22). She appears to be only at home in her father’s house at the bottom of the sea where her every journey begins. We may concede that Thetis’ intense and sustained grief which begins before Achilles’ death (triggered by Patroclus’ death) and will continue beyond his death is perhaps unique, but she could be seen as more hands-off than Aphrodite or Athena when it comes to providing maternal protection to her son on the battlefield.

This brings us to our last question – is she not unique in her choice of places where she operates? She is a reluctant visitor to Olympus and reluctant resident on the earth, does not visit Hades or alternative locations for afterlife when it comes to her son’s fate, and seems ultimately only at home in her father’s home at the bottom of the sea. She is also different from

36. GRIFFIN 1980, 190.

37. GRIFFIN 1980, 190.

38. 24. 90-91 as quoted in Griffin 1980, 190-191.

39. TSAGALIS 2008, 218.

other sea deities in that her main activities are focussed on the seashore where the Achaean ships are beached. This is where she meets Achilles, listens to his complaints, sheds tears with him and promises to seek divine aid for him (1. 419-427, 18. 136-137).⁴⁰ It is also on the seashore that she laments Patroclus' death with Achilles and eventually Achilles' own death. As Albinus points out, the funeral rites can be regarded as a communion between the deceased and the living.⁴¹ By taking part in the funeral of Patroclus (23. 14), which foreshadows her hosting of Achilles' own funeral⁴² (cf. *Od.* 24. 47-92), Thetis is communicating with the dead below in the way that the other gods never do.⁴³

Glancing back at the 'Seashore' column of Table (2), we can see that some gods do mingle with humans there. Athena intervenes in the Achaeans' assemblies (1. 194-222, 2. 169-181), Apollo causes the plague in response to Chryses' prayers (1. 43-53) and Hermes escorts Priam to and from the hut of Achilles (24. 440-468, 682-694). As seen above Poseidon takes part in the battle on the seashore more actively than any other god (Books 13-15). However, the activities of none of the other gods are concentrated as intensely as Thetis' on the seashore.

In the *Iliad* the seashore is above all where the tale of Achilles and Thetis unfolds, where the dry land of the mortals to which Achilles belongs and the sea where Thetis belongs meet, and it is where the tragic tone of the *Iliad* resonates. It can be seen as the nexus of the Iliadic universe where

40. Cf. TSAGALIS 2012, 100, who observes that the seashore in the *Iliad* is 'a highly thematised area, a place of isolation and sadness, of prayer and lament. It is closely associated with Achilles, who meets his mother Thetis there in *Iliad* I and XVIII ...' He also points out, citing the example of Chryses' prayer to Apollo, that the seashore 'is also a "break-off" space where mortals and immortals meet'. BEAULIEU 2016, 1, on the other hand, sees the sea as providing 'a backdrop for maternal reassurance' in the episode of Thetis coming to help Achilles.

41. ALBINUS 2000, 36.

42. For the aspects of Patroclus' funeral foreshadowing Achilles' see BURGESS 2009, 91-92.

43. Another episode that shows the seashore as a meeting point of the living and the dead is that of Achilles' encounter with Patroclus' ghost in his dream (23. 65-101).

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the tracks of the movements to and from the heaven, the human world inland, the sea and the underworld cross. Given the backdrop of the Trojan War fought in the space between the sea and the citadel, Thetis is uniquely suited to her role in the *Iliad* as the goddess between four worlds, whose movements focus our attention on the seashore, connecting her beloved son Achilles on the land with the gods above and connecting him to the world of the dead below.

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Table (1) Thetis's movements

<i>Iliad</i> Book	Heaven (Mt. Olympus)	Earth (human world)	Seashore	Sea	Underworld
1	with Zeus	Phthia	with Achilles	home	with Briareus?
2					
3					
4		Phthia			
5					
6		Phthia		saved Dionysus	
7					
8	with Zeus				
9		prophecy			
10		Phthia			
11		prophecy			
12					
13	with Zeus				
14					
15	with Zeus				

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16		Phthia prophecy			
17		prophecy			
18	with Zeus; with Hephaestus	Phthia prophecy	with Achilles	home; saved Hephaestus	
19			with Achilles		
20		Phthia			
21		Phthia prophecy			
22					
23		Phthia; Dionysus' wedding gift (urn)	Patroclus' funeral		
24	with Zeus	Phthia	with Achilles	home	
Od. 24			Achilles' funeral	home	
<i>Aethiopis</i>			Achilles's funeral		White Island
other sources					dips Achilles in the Styx

Table (2) Divine locations and movements in the *Iliad* [& other sources]

Name	Heaven	Earth	Seashore	Sea	Underworld
Thetis	with Zeus; with Hephaestus	at Phthia as Peleus' wife and Achilles' mother	with Achilles beside Achaean ships	home with father and sisters	Briareos (?) [dips Achilles in the Styx]
Zeus	Mt. Olympus & Mt. Ida	battlefield at Troy; liaisons with mortal women & Ganymede	(remotely) interferes with battle by the ships (Bk 15)		
Hera	Mt. Olympus & Mt. Ida	battlefield at Troy; 5.784-91 disguised as Stentor		brought up by Oceanus & Tethys	(oath by the Styx 14. 278, 15.37)
Athena	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy; temple at Troy; Pylos (Bk 11)	Achaean assemblies; battle by the ships (Bk 15)		with Heracles <i>Il.</i> 8. 365-369 [with Heracles <i>Od.</i> 11. 626]
Apollo	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy; seat at Pergamos; kidnapped Alcyone; cowherd for Laomedon; kills Niobes' sons	Sends the plague; battle by the ships (Bk 15); funeral games; protects Hector's body		

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Hermes	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy; liaison with mortal woman	escorts Priam to Achilles' hut		[with Heracles at <i>Od.</i> 11. 626; Psychopompos at <i>Od.</i> 24. 1-10]
Poseidon	Mt. Olympus; Samothrace	battlefield at Troy; built Troy; shakes earth; Pylos (Bk 11); liaison with mortal women	will destroy Achaean wall; battle by the ships (Bks 13-15)	own domain	
Hades	medical treatment at Mt. Olympus	[abducts Persephone]			home
Iris	Mt. Olympus	messenger to gods and humans; rescues Aphrodite	messenger to Achilles (Bk 18)	messenger to Thetis	
Nereids	Mt. Olympus (implied at 20.5-9)		accompany Thetis to Achaean camp	home	
Hephaestus	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy		rescued by Thetis	
Dionysus	Mt. Olympus (implied at 20.5-9)	Persecuted by Lycurgus		rescued by Thetis	

(to be continued)

Name	Heaven	Earth	Seashore	Sea	Underworld
Eos	Rises daily to sky/ Mt. Olympus	[married Tithonus]		rises from the streams of Oceanus	[makes her son Memnon immortal]
Aphrodite	Mt. Olympus	city and battlefield at Troy; bore Aeneas in folds of Mt. Ida			
Ares	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy; liaison with a mortal woman			(nearly died? in a jar)
Artemis	Mt. Olympus	battlefield at Troy; kills Niobe's daughters			
'All the gods'	Assembly at Olympus (20.5-9)	Visit the Aethiopians (Bks 1 & 23); Peleus & Thetis' wedding			

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